

Sharon Sealy

Executive Director and Deputy Operations Manager

Sharon Sealy serves as the Executive Director and Deputy Operations Manager for the Office of Research Administration, reporting to the Senior Vice President for Research at Downstate Health Sciences University. She has 30+ years' experience in every aspect of Research Administration, having worked in both departments and institutional central offices, as well as overall research operations.

Sharon's experience includes both pre-and post-award, clinical trials, compliance and audit. In Sharon's current role, she oversees Sponsored Programs Administration, Clinical Trials, Sponsored Programs Finance, HR, Accounts Payable and Procurement as it relates to sponsored awards. She enjoys working in a collaborative and fast-paced environment and has managed large and small operations, focusing on team building and value-added services to researchers and department administration.





Erinn McDowell **Clinical Trials Manager**

Erinn McDowell is the Cancer Center Clinical Trials Manager at SUNY Upstate, where she oversees the adult clinical research program for cancer patients. In her role, Erinn ensures that the coordinators and principal investigators who enroll study subjects have the necessary support to accomplish their challenging tasks. The research conducted under her management focuses on discovering the best treatments for cancer patients, and she strives to embody the servant leadership model in her approach. Erinn consistently asks herself, "How can I help my team help our patients?" This mindset has been instrumental in adding positions to the department and reducing turnover. Outside of work, Erinn enjoys traveling, cooking, and trying to pet every dog she encounters on the street.

Keith Kaplan

Strategic Projects Special Assistant

Keith Kaplan is an operations and project manager, as well as a financial professional with 35 years of experience, including 16 years at the Research Foundation (RF) and SUNY. Throughout his career at RF and SUNY, Keith has held various roles such as operations manager, interim campus CFO, financial reporting manager, strategic project coordinator, and internal controls coordinator.

Before joining RF and SUNY, Keith worked in the private sector in publishing as an accounting director and gained extensive experience in internal and external audits. He is a Certified Public Accountant in the state of New York, holding an undergraduate degree in Accounting from NYU, and an MBA along with a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management and Leadership from the University at Albany.

Keith is very interested in history and politics, often indulging in audiobooks and podcasts on these subjects. He enjoys outdoor activities such as running, hiking, cycling, and walking his two dogs—one of which is a grand-dog on (very) long-term loan. Keith and his wife frequently escape the cold New York winters by traveling to Florida. They have two grown children who currently live in far-away, fun-to-visit locations.

In addition to his extensive professional experience, Keith takes pride in his long-standing involvement with mentoring and teaching others. He has guest lectured multiple times for RF Learning and Development, the University at Albany, and even elementary school students. Three times a year, he delivers lectures for the Community Loan Fund for the Capital Region.





Jennifer Rudes **Director, Sponsored Programs** **Pre-Award Services**

Jennifer Rudes is currently the Director for the Office of Sponsored Programs and Pre-Award Services at SUNY Upstate. With over 20 years of experience in research administration, Jennifer is responsible for the direction and management of pre-award grants, agreements, and contract administration. She holds a Master of Science degree in Management with an emphasis in research from Emmanuel College.

Jennifer's office works directly with research faculty and staff, and she is dedicated to maintaining a positive, non-toxic, and supportive work environment within her department. She recognizes and appreciates the diversity in work styles among her team members.

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Jennifer enjoys all types of fitness, traveling to new places, and indulging in coffee. She is an active mother of two boys and has completed a Trifecta in the Spartan race series.

Melissa Emanus

Export Control and Research Compliance Officer

Melissa Emanus serves as SUNY Downstate's Export Control and Research Compliance Officer. In this role, she is responsible for creating an export control program on campus and collaborating with the Executive Director to develop and update policies and procedures across the Office of Research Administration. Her efforts ensure efficiency and compliance with federal regulations, as well as sponsor and institutional policies. Prior to this position, Melissa held pre- and post-award roles at RFSUNY, CUNY, and Tufts University. She is known for her attention to detail, love of reading, and inquisitive nature, always seeking to understand the "why" behind her work. Melissa enjoys collaborating with colleagues to troubleshoot, solve problems, and discuss daily challenges. In the past year, Melissa and two Downstate colleagues set professional development and volunteering goals, meeting monthly to check in on progress and plan collaborations. With their support and encouragement, Melissa was elected to the Research Administration Certification Council's (RACC) Board of Directors in October 2023. Additionally, they co-authored an article published in NCURA Magazine. Melissa is immensely proud of their collective and individual accomplishments over the past year. Outside the realm of research administration, Melissa finds joy at the beach with her two boys, aged 7 and 9, and a good book.





Elizabeth Brady **Senior Manager, Workforce** **Planning and Initiatives**

Liz Brady currently serves as the Senior Manager for Workforce Planning and Initiatives at Stony Brook University and is also a Lecturer for the School of Professional Development in the Master of Science in Human Resource Management program, where she teaches courses in Training and Employee Development, Leadership and Workforce Planning.

She is a member of the Long Island Society of Human Resource Management (LI-SHRM.) Liz is SHRM-SCP certified and holds a Master of Science degree in Human Resource Management and Labor Relations from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). She is passionate about helping others achieve their professional goals and is known for her leadership style, which focuses on encouragement, growth, and acceptance.

Christina Seado Vasquez

Director of CSTEP

Dr. Christina Seado Vasquez is a higher education professional with over 15 years of experience specializing in student success. Currently serving as the Director of the SUNY Oswego Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, Christina oversees a diverse cohort of over 100 students, providing invaluable support through tailored programming, personalized advising, and seamless operational coordination. Since securing the grant for SUNY Oswego in September 2020, she has been instrumental in the program's growth and impact. She has been in this role since the grant was awarded to SUNY Oswego in September of 2020.

Prior to her tenure at SUNY Oswego, Christina held various pivotal roles within Florida's educational landscape. In her most recent position, she served as Assistant Dean of Students at Palm Beach State College's Loxahatchee Campus.

Christina earned her doctorate of education from Grand Canyon University, specializing in organizational leadership in higher education. In addition, she holds a Master of Arts in Business Communications and a Bachelor of Science in Biology.

Recently, Christina was selected as a 2024 Hispanic Leadership Institute. In addition, she was recognized for her dedication to educational leadership and honored as a National Community College Hispanic Council Fellow in 2018. Driven by empathy and a passion for innovation, Christina is deeply invested in the well-being and achievements of others. Her relentless pursuit of solutions and unwavering support serve as pillars of inspiration for those under her guidance.





Lori Marjowski

Sponsored Award Analyst

Lori Marjowski is a Sponsored Award Analyst at the Stony Brook Campus, where she has been with the Research Foundation for 22 years. In her role, Lori is responsible for managing day-to-day transactions on grants, including payroll processing, travel arrangements, and financial reporting. She collaborates closely with departments and principal investigators to ensure timely and accurate processing while adhering to all terms and conditions.

Lori's career with the Research Foundation began in 2000 as a Financial Specialist in the post-award area at Stony Brook University (SBU). She left in 2005 to care for her son, who is now 20 years old, and the joy of her life. During this time, Lori continued working with the Research Foundation as a Collections Specialist at CPMP, part-time during the evenings. She returned to the Office of Grants Management in 2016, taking on her current position.

Lori values working with a wonderful group of coworkers and has found great fulfillment in her professional journey. She participated as a Protégé in the mentoring program in 2019, which she found very rewarding. Married for 30 years to her husband Krys, who has also worked on the SBU Campus for over 20 years, Lori enjoys spending time with her family and friends. They have a spoiled Rottweiler and enjoy attending concerts, hockey games, and bull riding events. Lori is always eager to learn new things and continually seeks opportunities for professional growth.

Erica Wright

Associate Director

Payroll & APPO

Erica Wright is the Associate Director of Payroll & AP/PO for the RF Central Office. In her role, she oversees various duties related to payroll, labor distribution, accounts payable, and treasury functions while leading a dedicated staff of two.

Erica is known for her detail-oriented approach and supportive nature, always eager to find solutions to challenging problems. A notable professional achievement for Erica is obtaining a second degree in accounting while working full-time, showcasing her commitment to personal and professional growth.

In her spare time, Erica enjoys spending time with friends, family, and her beloved pets, a dog named Trudy and a cat named Lucy.





Abbi Jordan

Training Program Coordinator

Abbi Jordan is a Training Program Coordinator in the Child Welfare Department at the Professional Development Program. With over 15 years of experience working with children and families, Abbi coordinates the daily training activities for five child welfare contracts. She collaborates with teams to review and revise curricula and liaises with various internal and external stakeholders, including the Office of Children and Family Services, Local Districts of Social Services, and Voluntary Agencies. Abbi oversees a team of seven staff members and seven independent contractors.

Abbi received her undergraduate degree from Seattle Pacific University and began her career in child welfare. After meeting her husband, who was in the Navy, they relocated to Ballston Lake, NY. Abbi holds a Master's in Public Affairs and Policy with a concentration in Nonprofit Management from Rockefeller College.

She is the proud mother of a 4-year-old daughter. Outside of work, Abbi enjoys cooking, watching football (go Seahawks!), and catching up on her favorite TV shows. She is especially proud of her professional accomplishments in developing and implementing a program in Seattle, WA, to locate supportive adult connections for youth currently and formerly in foster care.

Laurian Bradford **Director, Sponsored** **Programs**

Lauri Bradford oversees the pre-and post-award team at SUNY Downstate, reporting to the Executive Director of Research Administration. Her extensive experience in research administration includes positions at Columbia University and Northwell Health. Lauri is known for her detail-oriented approach and her commitment to creating a supportive work environment.

With over 13 years in research administration, Lauri is dedicated to reinvesting in the field through training and mentorship. She is a graduate of CUNY's MS in Research Administration and Compliance and is RACC certified as a CRA. Lauri has presented at both SRAI and NCURA conferences and has served as an SRAI Odyssey mentor to four individuals at various stages of their careers. In 2023, she was recognized by SRAI as one of the "Future of the Field" honorees.

In her personal life, Lauri aims to take more time off and travel, particularly to beautiful island beaches, reflecting her Caribbean background.





Niki Pizzutelli

Director for Student Success & Engagement

Niki Pizzutelli serves as the Director for Student Success & Engagement at the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. She oversees a diverse range of events, activities, and professional development opportunities for current students. Specializing in student well-being, Niki manages early intervention strategies, student behavioral concerns, and other key student affairs functions. In addition to her role, she is actively engaged as a Professional Staff Senator and serves as the Faculty Senator alternate for UB Health Sciences.

Originally from a small town in the Rochester, NY area, Niki has studied in Spain, lived in Germany and California, and enjoys continuous learning, yoga, and spending quality time with friends and family. Her greatest joys are her two active sons and supportive husband. Niki recently achieved certification as a Leadership Coach from the UB Center for Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness in May.

Steven Gabriel Clinical Trial Billing Specialist and Professor of Health

Steven Gabriel is a Clinical Trial Budget Specialist at the Upstate Medical University Cancer Center and a professor in the Health Department at SUNY Cortland. With a background spanning biomedical research, public health, and business administration, Steven excels in mentoring individuals with diverse interests or those seeking to explore new industries. His primary motivation lies in advancing the fight against cancer.

Beyond work, Steven enjoys hiking in state parks, playing cornhole at local breweries, and spending time with his dog, Ollie. His coaching approach focuses on helping mentees set meaningful goals, expand their horizons, and realize their full potential.





Conor Flynn

Director of Health Sciences Research Administration

Conor Flynn serves as the Director of Health Sciences Research Administration for the Jacobs School of Medicine at SUNY Buffalo. He assumed this role in December 2022, bringing extensive experience in managing federal research subcontracts from his tenure at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Prior to joining MSKCC, Conor specialized in negotiating industry clinical research agreements at the UB Clinical Research Office, where he facilitated several SUNY-wide Master Clinical Trial Agreements.

Before his career at UB, Conor worked as an Intellectual Property Licensing Executive at Xerox in Rochester, NY.

He resides in Orchard Park, NY, with his wife, Ann Dillon, and their two dogs. Conor is also a former elected official on the Orchard Park Town Board and a licensed attorney; Conor earned his JD from UB School of Law and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Cell and Developmental Biology from the University of Rochester.

Megan Zabel **Senior Analyst** **Coordinator**

Megan Zabel is currently a Senior Award Analyst Coordinator at UB, specializing in the post-award side of research administration. With nearly 10 years of experience at RF, Megan manages compliance and oversees the financial aspects of RF-sponsored awards, bridging roles from award setup to closeout.

Coming from a background as a math teacher, Megan found her unexpected passion in research administration, appreciating the constant learning and dynamic challenges of the field.

Megan has embraced opportunities for growth at RF, including presenting at the RF Symposium in 2017—an experience that pushed her beyond her comfort zone and proved rewarding. She has also championed initiatives like daily check-in sessions and conducted numerous training sessions for colleagues, aiming to inspire others to pursue and thrive in research administration.

Megan values her role for its continual evolution and contribution to advancing research efforts.





Tiffany Jones Project Coordinator

Tiffany Jones is a dedicated public health professional on a mission to advance health equity, particularly for marginalized communities. She holds a double Bachelor of Science in Health and Nutrition Science and Public Health from CUNY Brooklyn College. As a first-generation college graduate, Tiffany takes pride in breaking generational cycles.

Her journey in public health began with a realization of the profound impact of social determinants on community health. Currently, Tiffany serves as the Youth Health Advocate Project Coordinator at Teens Helping Each Other, an adolescent education program at SUNY Downstate Health Science University. For Tiffany, this role is not just a job, but a passion rooted in advocating for positive change, knowledge dissemination, and inspiring others to pursue their aspirations.

She believes in being the supportive figure she lacked growing up, empowering others to reach for the stars.

Tiffany was recently featured in a Who YOU Are Is Who WE Are video. [Watch here.](#)